

# Powering up for robotics competition

Less than three hours left, and the pace had definitely picked up.

“I’m panicking,” said Lauren, Robotics of Central Kitsap (ROCK) co-captain. Though panic wasn’t obvious on the Central Kitsap High sophomore’s face. This would be her team’s last chance to get their robot ready before competition. Some parts weren’t working right. The roster had been fluctuating all week. Game day was coming.

ROCK, like teams across the country, have prepped since January for this year’s FIRST Robotics competitions. FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) aims to marry the excitement of sports with science and tech. Robotics alone is a draw for many. “You know you’re learning things when you watch it move in front of you,” Lauren said.

That kind of appeal has spurred robotics programs in CK Schools. Students can find both in- and after-school, lessons classes or clubs at all grade levels. New robotics labs are under construction at Olympic High, Central Kitsap High and Central Kitsap Middle schools.

Lauren speaks with awe recalling last year’s competitions. She watched peers troubleshoot amidst a mystery mess of wires. “They were doing more than what you’d think high school students could do,” she said. And she thought, “I want to do that.” This year, she can make sense of the wires.

Teammates from CK, Olympic and Klahowya work with staff, coaches and mentors — many from Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Keyport. They fundraise, design, machine parts and build. “Imagine a forklift being built by a teenager,” said co-captain Mike, an Olympic senior.

During competition, that “forklift” will grab milk crate-sized cubes and move them to both ground-level and 75-inch high spots for points while a clock ticks down. They collaborate with two other teams in three-on-three matches in a tournament-style event. Alliances change with each match, so it’s a friendly contest. And it sure is fun, said Coach Marvin Frilles, who trains Navy reservists by day. Frilles once saw an aircraft carrier captain let loose, screaming at the top of his lungs as his son’s team took the field.

Each year, the game field and rules change. Changes are announced in January. Then, “you live and breathe robotics for six weeks,” said ROCK member Charlie. She’s an Olympic High sophomore.

They spent 14 to 20 hours a week after school and on Saturday mornings before they had to “bag and tag” their ‘bot. “I never thought I’d do



anything for extracurricular activity much less sell my soul,” Lauren said.

The robot stayed bagged until five days before their first qualifying event in Yakima. Then, they had six hours to tweak and repair their machine. They huddled around laptops to adjust programming. They squeaked pens on whiteboards to fill last-minute gaps in the roster.

Two hours to go, they were mostly calm, still cracking jokes. At this stage and with hundreds of parts that can and will break along the way, “they’ve experienced it before,” said advisor Alex Booth.

A pack of seniors graduated last year, so they’re a young team. While they’re hopeful about district playoffs, a berth at the world championship would be a coup. But Lauren said the real goal is to have a full roster of returning players next January. “I hope our first-years learn a lot more and fall in love.”

*The district’s Robotics of Central Kitsap team welcomes students from all three district high schools.*



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Go to About > News to see how team ROCK did!

## ▶ link



**from David McVicker, Superintendent**

Are you happiest when you’re doing something you enjoy? Of course!

The same is true for kids. Students who do something they enjoy at school are more engaged. The students in our cover story love robotics. For others, it could be a different club, music, or sports. The results are the same: these students are twice as likely to get good grades and feel positive about school.

That’s why one of our goals is for every student to join a school activity. Beyond the academic and social benefits, these activities help students find their strengths. And as students learn more about themselves, they can start planning their futures.

We want our students to be ready for life after graduation. It could be college, a career, the military, or some combination. Each student has a pathway forward. Our task—our privilege—is to prepare them for it.



# CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS UPDATE: keeping our promises

Thanks to support from Central Kitsap residents, we're moving quickly on projects to make our schools more secure and modernize secondary schools.

## Safety & Security Improvements

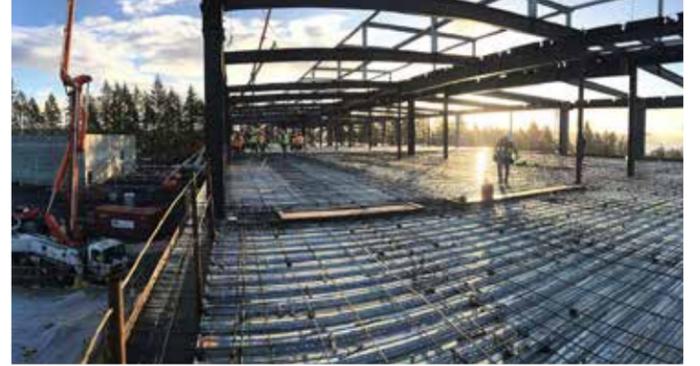


We've started the next major phase of security upgrades. Construction crews are now at Silver Ridge, Ridgetop and Emerald Heights. Work at all schools will be complete by the end of the next school year.



**CKschools.org**  
Go to About > Construction Updates and find out more.

## CK High and Middle School Replacement



Crews have erected the steel skeleton of much of the school and poured concrete on all three floors of the middle school and building core.

## Klahowya Secondary School Addition



Three new classrooms opened this winter for family and consumer science, fitness and science. Crews have done much of the framing work for the new gym and classroom wing.

## Olympic High School Modernization



Crews have framed much of the building and poured concrete for the first and second floors. Siding is up on the new manufacturing lab near Tibardis Road.

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- From Our Superintendent



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rise of the ROBOTs



Central Kitsap School District working with our community

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CKschools.org  
spring 2018